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Mini-Profiles: Here are the latest readings on the rulers most likely to inflame the Middle East:

Syria's Hafez Assad: He is a wily ruler, skilled at treachery and troublemaking. But intelligence sources tell me that Assad has been treated for an irreversible heart disease.

Iraq's Saddam Hussein: He's under such military pressure from Iran and economic pressure on the home front that he's close to desperation.

Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini: At 84 he appears as durable as ever. And he isn't about to be converted to reasonableness.

Israel's Yitzhak Shamir: Intelligence sources describe him as a suspicious, secretive man whose Cabinet is torn by bickering and backbiting.